

Story 713 (1970 Tapes 12
and 13)

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Province

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Şah İsmail

Once there was and once there was not a padişah who had no children. One day his wife said to him, "Your Majesty, this situation must not be allowed to continue. Go and find some ^{curd}remedy for our problem. I want children who will succeed to your throne when you die.

Taking a vizier with him, the padişah set out on a journey.¹ One day as they rode along, they felt hungry and decided to stop by a fountain to eat. As they were just about to begin eating, a dervish appeared. This dervish said "Selâmünaleykûm,² Your Majesty."

"And Aleykümselâm to you, O Dervish Efendi. Inasmuch as you know that I am a padişah, you may very well know also what my problem is."

¹ In Turkish tales men who seek a remedy for their childlessness usually do not go to a known person or known place to get it. They simply start out on a journey, as if they expected the remedy to find them--and usually it does! They are as directionless as the Knights of the Round Table seeking the Grail in Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.

² The traditional Muslim greetings between strangers: "Peace be unto you," and "And peace be unto you also."

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The dervish then took from his pocket an apple^{magic apple} and gave it to the padişah, saying, "Peel this apple and share the fruit with your wife. Feed the peelings to your mare. When a child is born by your wife, let him remain nameless until I come to name him."

Returning home, the padişah told his wife what had happened. He peeled the apple, and the two of them ate it. Then he took the peelings to his horse. In nine months and ten days the wife of the padişah bore a male child, whom they called only Atsız Bey.³ Even when he reached the age of nine or ten, he had no regular name. At school the other children called "Atsız Bey, Atsız Bey" wherever he went, here and there and up and down. Noticing the effect that this had upon the boy, his mother one day said to the padişah, "We really ought to name him. Being nameless has now begun to depress him."

A naming ceremony was announced, but just as this ceremony was about to start, the dervish reappeared. He said, "The boy's name will be Şah Ismail."⁴ Then, taking

³ Atsız could mean without horse or horseless, but here it means without name. Ad is the word for name, but s, the voiceless first letter of the suffix -sız, requires the immediately preceding consonant, d, to take its voiceless form, t.

⁴ Şah Ismail was the ^{name} of the first Safavid Shah of Persia, ruling from 1502-1524. He was a Shia or Shi'ite leader who contended very aggressively, both on religious and political

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the boy's arm and pulling him closer, he whispered into the boy's ear, "Your talisman⁵ will be the bowstring, but do not ever tell this to anyone else. Even if you should be bound in chains, the bowstring will save you." The boy said nothing about this to anyone there, and soon the dervish disappeared.⁶

One day while Şah Ismail was hunting wandering about from place to place in pursuit of game, he saw a Türkmen⁷ girl enter a tent. He soon fell in love with this girl

grounds, with the Ottoman Empire. In time, the name, when used by others, lost virtually all of its religious and political significance. There are numerous folk romances, often sung by folk poets or minstrels, in which the male lead is named Şah Ismail. See variants elsewhere in ATON.

⁵ A talisman may be merely a good-luck charm, an amulet. At times it is the receptacle for an individual's "external soul" or "life force." It is so integral a part of the individual's whole existence that its destruction may also destroy the individual, and, hence, the necessity of keeping its existence and location secret.

⁶ Hızır, granter of wishes and agent of Divine Will, often appears to mortals in the guise of a dervish. He often plays exactly the role of the dervish in this tale, but the identification with Hızır is not here mentioned.

⁷ Descendants of the Oghuz Turks, whose twenty-four tribes settled in Asia Minor, the Türkmen (also called Turcomans or Turkamans) were those Oghuz heirs who remained nomadic until very recent times. There are many Türkmen who are still nomadic or semi-nomadic in the Turkmenian S.S.R., in Iran, in Afghanistan, and in the Azerbaijanian S.S.R.

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and they made an arrangement to continue seeing each other Şah Ismail would leave the palace every day, pretending to be going hunting, but, in reality, he was going to visit the Türkmen girl.

As this continued, however, Şah Ismail began to decline ^{love sickness} in health, growing paler and paler every day. His father began to wonder where he went every day. He thought, "Everyone else who goes hunting brings back game at the end of the day, but he never brings back anything." When he questioned his son's companions about this, they said, "Well, sir, every day he takes one direction and orders us to take another direction." The padişah then had his son's route followed, and it was discovered that he was visiting a girl. As soon as he knew how matters stood, the padişah sent a message to the Türkmen ¹¹¹⁻¹¹² Bey who was the girl's father, requesting that the two young people be engaged and then later married.

Türkmen Bey responded, "To whom should I give my daughter if not to your son?" But when the Bey told his wife about this exchange with the padişah, he said, "I do not intend to give him our daughter. Let us send her to live somewhere else." That very day, at midnight, they sent her to live in another country.

Two or three days later, Şah Ismail went again to

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visit the girl, but she failed to appear at their usual meeting place. When he searched for her but could not find his beloved, he fell ill. Various doctors were called to examine the young man, but none of them was able to find any remedy for his illness. Finally he said to his father, "Nothing will do but that I go in search of my beloved."

Provided with a horse and all the money he might need, the young man set out to find the daughter of the Türkmen Bey. After riding for a great distance, he came to a castle. Very hungry and thirsty, he noticed a dish of pilav⁸ at the base of the castle wall, and he decided to go at once and eat that pilav. But just as he was about to dip his spoon into it, he heard a voice from above say, "O young man, you cannot eat that pilav without first fighting with me. That is known as 'bloody pilav.'"

The young man replied, "Whatever you may call it, I shall first eat that pilav and then afterwards fight with you." After eating it, he mounted his horse and said, "Come out now, whoever you may be."

There rode forth from the castle an Arab warrior with a mask over his face. The young man called to him, "All

⁸Pilav or pilaf is a rice dish containing flakes of meat and often a sprinkling of either currants or pine nuts or both. It is a staple among Turkish foods.

Disguise

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right! Come on! Throw your mace!" When the Arab threw his mace he missed his mark, but when, in return, Şah Ismail threw his mace, he knocked the Arab down. "What now?" he asked.

"Shall I cut off your head?" At that moment the Arab removed the mask and revealed himself to be a girl as beautiful as the fourteenth of the moon.⁹ Taking one look at this girl, he fell to the ground in a dead faint. — *love faint*

The girl clapped her hands, and when several servants appeared, she said to them, "Take your brother upstairs." They carried him upstairs, where the young man soon revived. When he was again able to talk, the girl said to him, "I want to marry you."

Şah Ismail said, "I am searching for my Güllüzar, and I cannot marry anyone else."

When he left, however, the Arab girl accompanied him, saying, "I shall never allow you to go alone."

After riding for some distance, they came to a place that was enclosed by four walls. Wishing to enter this

⁹ The moon has many dimensions of beauty to Turkish and other Middle Eastern peoples. Many national flags contain a crescent moon. Nightingales supposedly sing to the moon. The Muslim calendar is a lunar calendar. To liken a girl to the moon is in itself a compliment, but to liken her to the fourteenth of the moon--halfway through the lunar cycle, when the moon is full (and hence most beautiful)--is the ultimate compliment. It also suggests the Middle Eastern male preference for rotundity in the female figure rather than thinness.

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compound to see what it contained, Şah Ismail had his horse push against one of these walls with his chest until it gave way. Inside he found a girl who embroidered but wept as she did so.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked.

"I have seven brothers ^{72 sisters, 114, 117} who have gone out hunting, and when they come back they will be angered by the damage you have done to that wall. Also, I have had a dream in which I saw that three of my brothers had been killed."

"Do not worry about that. In what direction did they go?"

"They went that way," she said, pointing off to one side.

Saying to the Arab girl, "You stay here and serve as guard to this girl in the compound," Şah Ismail set out in the direction that the girl had indicated. He soon came to a place where two groups of giants were fighting. He saw that one group of seven giants had already had three of its members killed. He called to the four remaining giants,

"Selâmunaleyküm."

"Aleykümselâm."

Şah Ismail and the four giants drove off their opponents in the battle that followed. The youngest of the four brothers said, "God has sent this young man to save us, see how exhausted he is now."

After resting for a while, they started for home. When

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they arrived there, they asked their sister, "Whom did you let in?"

"No one," she said, "except the girl who is standing guard over me."

Şah Ismail and the Arab girl stayed with the four brothers and their sister that night. In the morning the brothers suggested strongly that Şah Ismail marry their sister. But the young man declined this offer, saying, "No, I cannot marry anyone until I have found my Güllüzar."

Şah Ismail and his companion then departed and resumed their search. They went a little way, they went a great way, and after a while they came to a town where a wedding celebration was in progress. Pipes were being played and drums were being beaten.

"Whose wedding is this?" they asked an old woman.

"There is a woman here named Lady Güllüzar who is being married to a butcher."

Şah Ismail then asked the old woman, "Mother, will you accept us as guests in your home for the night?"

"Of course," she said, and invited them into her house.

In the morning Şah Ismail said to their hostess, "Will you take this golden bowl to Güllüzar and ask her where I can go to talk with her?"

"They would not let me get into the place where she is.

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Giving the old woman a great amount of money, he said, "Well, you just try anyway."

The old woman went to the house where the wedding was being held. After she had made her way through a large crowd of people, she reached the room where the female guests were gathered. She said loudly, "Let the henna¹⁰ for Güllüzar's hands be mixed in this beautifully ornamented bowl!" As she ascended the stairs to take the bowl to the girl, someone knocked the old lady down.¹¹ Getting to her feet, she climbed farther and struggled to reach Güllüzar.

When Güllüzar saw the golden bowl, she recognized it at once and called out to the guards, "Let her come! Let her come!" When the old woman finally reached her, Güllüzar asked, "Where is he now? Where is he?"

"He is at my home."

"Tell him to come to the rose garden."¹⁵⁶⁻¹⁷

Returning home, she said to Şah Ismail, "She wants you to go to the rose garden, where the two of you can talk."

¹⁰In many countries a reddish-brown dye made of henna is used to color hands of women for special occasions, especially weddings. In almost all rural weddings and in some urban weddings in Turkey, it is a "must" that the bride's hands be hennaed.

¹¹The narrator says quite clearly that someone knocked her down with a pick-axe. That seems out of place in this context.

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Şah Ismail and the Arab girl went to the rose garden, where he and Güllüzar began to talk with each other. The Arab girl at first waited nearby. Then she came closer to the garden house, reached down from her horse through the open window, grasping Güllüzar and pulling her up to sit behind her on the horse. To Şah Ismail she shouted, "You come and follow us!"

Abduction
kidnapping

In this way they escaped. But news of this daring act spread all over the country, and soon troops were dispatched in pursuit of them. They continued to flee as long as they were able to do so, but they finally reached a place where they could no longer proceed without some rest. Şah Ismail said, "I am very tired and must have some sleep for a while." Güllüzar also slept while the Arab girl stood watch.

A company of troops reached that place and found them there. The Arab girl intercepted them and fought with these troops, killing many and driving off the rest. Throughout this battle, Şah Ismail and Güllüzar slept. When he did finally awaken, Şah Ismail said, "Arab girl, I am hungry. Let us shoot some partridges and eat them." After they had done this,

Taking her with them, they continued their journey until they reached the home of

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the Arab girl.

There the Arab girl gathered together some of her most precious belongings to take along with them. Then she said to Şah Ismail, "Let us now go to the home of your father." As they rode along in that direction, the Arab girl said, "Let me consult the numbers to see what is ahead of us."¹² After she had read the message of the numbers, she said, "Prince, I have changed my mind. Do not take me to your parents.

not?"

"Because the numbers show much blood ahead of us."

Hearing this, the young man sent a telegram¹³ to his parents requesting that they hire a new apartment house for them.¹⁴ A separate mansion was hired, and when they arrived home, they moved into it immediately.

¹²A type of geomancy is widely practiced among rural people in Turkey. It is called remel or remil. Several dice-like cubes are thrown upon the ground. The numbers on them have been assigned some symbolic value or equated with letters of the alphabet. The line of numbers on the tops of the cast dice forms a message of some sort. The casting of remil pieces may have to be done several times to extract the total message. Sometimes the knuckle bones of sheep are used for this purpose. A number is scratched or painted on each side of these bones.

¹³This is an obvious anachronism.

¹⁴Rural Turks are so taken with urban apartment houses that they can think of nothing more magnificent as housing for their folktale royalty. Again, this is an obvious anachronism.

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It was no surprise that among their first visitors would be the parents of Şah Ismail. They came to visit on the first day that they were there, and when Şah Ismail's mother discovered that there were three brides in that house, she became very jealous.¹⁵ That same evening when they were at the palace, she said to her husband, "You should kill your son and take those three brides yourself."

could I do that? He must have worked very hard to win three such ladies. Why should I kill my son for this sort of thing?"

"You must do it!" she insisted. "Send him a challenge to a wrestling match. You will defeat him in the wrestling match, and the penalty for losing will be death

After thinking about this for a while, the padişah finally sent the message, saying, "Son, let us wrestle.

Şah Ismail replied, "All right, Father."

The wrestling match was held in a public square. Besides the ordinary people of the area, all of the viziers and ministers were gathered there to witness this contest

Of course, the young man was able to defeat his father

¹⁵The logic here is questionable. In tales of this kind, it is the father who is jealous, not the mother. What sense would there be in having the mother jealous? She is not interested in having the three beautiful girls, but the father, however improperly, might be jealous.

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easily, but he said to himself, "No, no, we must not do that, for we should show respect to our elders." In the third match the son decided to allow his father to win, because he felt sorry for him.

When the father had won in this way, he announced, "Very well, now your head must be cut off.

But when the crowd heard this, they all arose and shouted, "No, no! We shall never allow Şah Ismail to be executed!"

"All right, then, I shall have to be satisfied with blinding him."

When both his eyes had been poked out, the young man pleaded, "Put my right eye in my right pocket and my left eye in my left pocket."

His father then said, "Now ^{120, 122} take him and throw him somewhere beyond the Kaf Mountains."¹⁶ After this had been done, he sent word to the three brides, "You must now move to the palace. Come here right away."

The Arab girl responded, "We cannot go to the palace quite as easily as that, for we have much goods to be carried. We want ¹²⁰⁻²¹ forty sacks and ¹²⁰⁻²¹ forty porters to carry

¹⁶ Imaginary mountains around the edges of the world to keep men and beasts from falling off into space. These mountains are usually pictured as being a great distance away--at the very end of the world--and very formidable--steep, rugged, and filled with wild beasts.

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these goods, and we want forty court ladies, all of them wives of viziers and ministers, to come with them to accompany us to the palace."

Forty porters soon arrived carrying forty sacks, and with them came forty ladies of the court, all of them wives of viziers and ministers. As soon as the ladies arrived, they were killed by the Arab girl, and their bodies were all stuffed into the forty sacks. The Arab girl then loaded these sacks onto the backs of the forty porters and sent them to the palace.

When the padişah opened one of these sacks, he found the corpse of the wife of such-and-such a vizier. He said angrily to his wife, "Didn't I tell you that we would cause trouble for ourselves by doing what you suggested? God knows what effort it must have cost the vizier to win this woman as his wife!"

When all of the viziers discovered what had happened to their wives, they went to the padişah and said, "We demand war upon those responsible for this." Troops were then sent to the mansion of Şah Ismail and his three brides.

When the Arab girl saw them approaching, she put a mask ^{Disguise} over her face and went out to meet them. In the battle that developed, she started killing soldiers to the right and to the left until there were hardly any of them left. When she

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returned to the mansion that evening, the Arab girl said to Güllüzar and Gülperi,¹⁷ "Don't either of you ever open the door to anyone but me." In the morning she went forth again to engage the new troops that the padişah had sent to attack them, and she continued to do this for forty days.

In the meantime, Şah Ismail was wandering about in the forest of the Mountains of Kaf. Birds flying above him said, "We wish that Şah Ismail could understand our language so that we could tell him that we shall drop three feathers whose magic power would make his eyes see again when he placed them in their sockets."

Magic
Object

With the help of Allah, Şah Ismail was able to understand what they were saying. Groping around on the ground, he found the three feathers. Taking his eyes from his pockets, he replaced them, one at a time, into their sockets, and immediately he was able to see with both of them.

Walking away from the Mountains, Şah Ismail realized that he was very hungry and thirsty. When he came upon a man plowing his field, he said, "Please, Father, will you give me some bread?"

"Where do you come from, Son?" asked the man.

"From a faraway place." When the man gave him some bread, he asked, "Will you also give me a knife?"

¹⁷This is the first time that a name has been given for the sister of the seven brothers. Gülperi means rose fairy.

Answer by -
understand f
human

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"What will you do with it if I do give you a knife?"

"I shall fight with it," said Şah Ismail

Because Şah Ismail looked very lean and weak, the man said, "You have very little strength for fighting."

"Never mind that. Just give me the knife."

After the plowman had given him a knife, Şah Ismail traveled until he reached his own kingdom. He went to his father (who did not recognize him) and said, "My padişah, I want to take part in the war."

The viziers laughed and said, "Look at him! How could you fight in the frail condition you are in--and with only a knife?"

"Well, I am tired of living and want to try my luck in battle.

The padişah said, "All right. Give him a horse and let him join the fighting if he wishes."

They gave him a horse and he rode away in the direction of the battle. There he came face to face with the Arab girl and called to her. When the girl heard him call, she said, "That is our brother's voice." In their encounter they carried on a mock battle, for neither wanted to injure the other

In the next evening the girl returned home, and Şah Ismail followed her. Removing her mask, she said, "I am

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the Arab girl."

"I thought so. Tomorrow we shall fight again on the battlefield, and I shall pretend that I have knocked you down. Then I shall send word to my father, saying, 'Come and kill your enemy with your own hands.' When I remove myself from your chest after my father arrives, you can do whatever you wish to him. Kill him if you wish, for he deserves

When the following morning arrived, the fighting was to be renewed. [This is the point at which 1970 Tape 12 ends and 1970 Tape 13 begins.] When Şah Ismail and the Arab girl came together, he pulled her down from her horse. When the padişah arrived on the scene, she stabbed the padişah several times and announced to everyone present, "Şah Ismail has returned to this world!"

A wedding ceremony was then held for forty days and forty nights to celebrate the marriage of Şah Ismail and Güllüzar. Later he called the Arab girl to him and said to her, "I shall marry you too."

"No," she said. "You marry Gülperi, and I shall remain as her aide."¹⁸

¹⁸The word used here is ahretlik, a word which currently has two meanings: (1) In Istanbul the word refers to a girl who is adopted by a well-to-do family. She serves as a maid without pay, but when she is of a marriageable age, the family provides her with a dowry and sees to it that she

is properly wed. (2) She may also be someone in a position comparable to that of a "milk sister." (If a nursing mother nurses, even briefly, a child not her own, then that other child becomes a "milk sibling" of her own child. Both children then are part of each other's family, receiving the affection, care, and protection of two families instead of just one.)